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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an ecological observational study of social interaction and cognitive socialization in family day care. The study employs a reciprocal model which analyzes effects of the caregiver on the child and of the child on the caregiver by comparing the interaction of the same caregiver with "own" and "other" children. Similarly, interaction of "own" and "other" children with the peer group in family day care is compared. Interaction in 19 family day care homes was observed. In each home, direct observations were made of two focal children: the caregiver.s own child and the day care child closest in age and of the same sex. Six 10-minute observational segments were collected for each focal child over two half days. Comparison of caregiver's "own" and matched "day care" children indicated that: (1) "own" children engaged in more negative social-emotional behaviors and received more discouragement from others; (2) "day care" children played more with peers and alone; and (3) caregivers interacted more with "own" children, watching them more and giving them more affection, while peers participated more with "day care" children. (Author/ED)

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Family Day Care Interaction:
Caregiver's Own and Day Care Children

Lois Pall Wandersman[1]

An ecological observational study of social interaction and cognitive socialization in Family Day Care (FDC) is presented. Comparison of caregivers' own and matched day care (dc) children showed: (1) own children engaged in more negative social-emotional behaviors and received more discouragement from others, (2) dc children played more with peers and alone, (3) caregivers interacted more with own children, watching them more and giving them more affection, while peers participated more with dc children. For both own and dc children, FDC provided not formal education, but rather, rich experiences of self-initiated play encouraged by participating peers and facilitated by caregivers.

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The Problem

Attention concerning day care for the more than 5.5 million preschool children of working mothers has been directed primarily to group day care centers. However, centers provide care for less than 8% of the preschool children of working mothers. The arrangement which provides care for the largest number of preschool children (20%) is Family Day Care (FDC) (Low & Spindler, 1968). In FDC:

> The caregiver or sitter is a non-relative, who may be a friend or neighbor or even a stranger, though probably a local one who lives in the same general neighborhood. The child goes out of his home, usually for several hours of the day or evening with the care taking place in the home of a family other than his own, hence the term "family day care". (Emlen, Donoghue, & Laforge, 1971, p.8.)

In spite of its prevalence, FDC has been virtually invisible because of its informal status and because of the isolation of private homes from the public eye. Empirical data concerning children in FDC has been scarce. Prescott's (1973) observations of preschool children indicates FDC to be similar to nursery-home care, and in contrast to center care, in (1) the high availability of adults, (2) child's control of the environment, (3) supports for self-esteem, and (4) opportunities for cognitive engagement. Most FDC caregivers in Peters' (1972) study were observed to be highly involved with the children, but many were rated as showing little verbal or physical contact, praise or encouragement, explanation of rules, or encouragement of exploration and curiousity. Saunders and Keister (1973) find that infants in FDC show a decline in mental and social developmental

quotients over a two year period, while infants in center care show gains. Clearly, research is needed to clarify how the experiences of children in FDC relate to children's development.

This research is an ecological observational study of social interaction and cognitive socialization in FDC homes. This paper focuses on the comparison of the experiences of the caretaker's own child with that of the day care child. The variable of "ownness-otherness" is an important component of substitute care, yet little is known about how the "otherness" of being a day care child affects the quality of interaction with the caregiver and with the peer group. The caregiver's own child and the day care child share a common caregiver, peers and physical environment in FDC, but for the caregiver's child the caregiver and the home are his own, while for the day care child they belong to other. Previous research has confounded "own" with "familiar" and "other" with "stranger" (e.g., Halverson & Waldrop, 1970; Landauer, Carlsmith, & Lepper, 1970), but in FDC the own-other dimension is within the context of a familiar relationship. In contrast to a unidirectional model in which caretaker influences child, the present study employs a reciprocal model (c.f., Bell, 1968) which also analyzes the effects of the child on the caretaker by comparing the interaction of the same caretaker with "own" and "other" child. Similarly, interaction of "own" and "other" child with the peer group in FDC are compared.

Methods

Sample

Interaction in 19 FDC homes was observed. Homes were selected in which the caregiver cared for at least one of her own preschool children and at least one day care child for at least 20 hours each week and in which own

child and day care child (i.e., focal children) were both: (a) between 1½ and 4½ years old, (b) less than one year apart in age, (c) same sex. Only two homes that were contacted which met this criteria refused to participate. Selected FDC homes were contacted through county licensing departments (n=10), voluntary associations of day care mothers (n=3), referrals (n=5), and newspaper advertisements (n=1).

In each home direct observations were made of two focal children: the caregiver's own child and the day care child closest in age (same sex).

Procedure

Observations were spread over 2 half days to increase the representativeness of the sample of behaviors. Six 10-minute observational segments were collected for each focal child, alternating the observation of the own and day care focal child.

A modified version of the Human Interaction Scale (HIS), developed by Watts (White & Watts, 1973), was used to record observations. The observer (O) watched the focal child for 15 seconds and during the following 15 seconds coded the activity of the preceding period on 7 dimensions: (1) activity, (2) initiator, (3) primary participant, (4) encouragement, (5) technique, (6) compliance, (7) verbal. Appendix I presents the categories of each dimension and the observer reliabilities.

Results

As seen in Table 1, the overall pattern of median frequencies for own and day care (dc)children was similar, especially for the matched focal children. For most of the children (35/38) Moderately Intellectual activities were relatively frequent (ranked 1 or 2), while Purposeless and Negative Social-Emotional activities were relatively infrequent (ranked 4-6). The frequency

of Highly Intellectual activities varied as much with the particular home and with the age of the focal child as with relationship to caregiver. (Median rank of Highly Intellectual activities was: 4.5 for own children less than 3 years, 4 for dc children less than 3 years, 1 for own children 3 years or older, 3 for dc children 3 years or older.) For all children, activities were more frequently Encouraged than Discouraged and more frequently interacted with by others who were Observing, Participating or Facilitating/Suggesting than Informing/Teaching, giving Affection/Reinforcement or Restricting.

Two-tailed Wilcoxin signed ranks test were performed to compare the frequency of acts in each cluster for the matched own and dc children (Table 1). Own children showed significantly fewer activities coded as Moderately Intelligent ($p<.01$) and significantly more Negative Social-Emotional behavior than matched dc children. Own and dc children did not differ significantly in frequency of activities coded as Highly Intellectual, Basic Care/Gross Motor, Purposeless, or Positive Social-Emotional behavior.

Own children showed significantly fewer activities engaged in by Self, and significantly more activities with Caregiver than dc children. Own and dc children did not differ significantly in frequency of interaction with Peers/Siblings. DC children interacted significantly more with Peers/Siblings than with Caregiver, while for own children the trend to interact with Peers/Siblings more than Caregiver was not significant ($p<.10$).

As shown in Table 2, dc children interacted more with peers in Moderately Intellectual activities than did own children, while own children

tended to interact more with Caregivers on Moderately Intellectual activities than dc children did ($p<.15$). DC children more often engaged in Positive Social-Emotional activities alone, while own children interacted in these activities more with Caregivers than dc children did. Own children engaged in more Negative Social-Emotional activities with Caregivers and with Peers/Siblings than did dc children. Own and dc children did not show significant differences in the frequency of interaction with Self, Caregivers or Peers/Siblings in Highly Intellectual or Basic Care/Gross Motor activities.

Own children's activities received significantly more Discouragement from others than did dc children, but there was no significant difference in frequency of Encouragement for activities.

Others interacted with own children significantly more than with dc children by Observing and Restricting, but showed no significant differences in frequency of Participating, Facilitating/Suggesting, Informing/Teaching, or Affection/Reinforcement. Own children interacted more with Caregivers who Observed them ($p<.01$) and who gave them Affection/Reinforcement ($p<.01$) than did dc children. For both own and dc children Caregivers were more likely than Peers/Siblings to Facilitate/Suggest (Mann-Whitmey, $p<.01$ own, $p<.10$ dc), Inform/Teach ($p<.01$ own, dc n. s.), Affection/Reinforcement ($p<.01$ own, $p<.10$ dc), while Peers/Siblings were more likely than Caregivers to Participate ($p<.01$ own, dc) or show Hostility ($p<.01$ own, dc).

Own and dc children did not differ significantly in Initiation of activities, Compliance to demands of others, or in proportion of acts which were Verbal.

Conclusion

The commonalities and the differences between own and day care children are illuminating. It is important to emphasize the overall similarity between own and day care children. In general, the focal children in the same home engaged in much the same kinds of activities and received very similar responses from the social environment. For all the children, almost all of the observation time was engaged in positive-toned free-play activities--for example, play with toys or household items, conversation, gross motor play, social games or fantasy. These activities were usually engaged in with peers who participated or observed or were engaged in alone, and were rarely discouraged by others. Caregivers tended to facilitate these activities, rather than to participate in them or formally structure or initiate them. Children rarely wandered aimlessly, showed distress or unhappiness, or fought. Negative behaviors of the child were likely to be responded to by peer participation or hostility, while caregivers tended to restrict these behaviors or distract the participants.

Own children differ from day care children in two major ways: they interact more with caregivers and engage in more negative social-emotional behaviors. Own children fought more with peers about having to share their toys and house and showed more moody or distress behaviors. In turn, they received more discouragement from their activities and more restriction of them. Caregivers observed their own children more and gave them more affection and reinforcement. Day care children, on the other hand, showed more play with peers and more watching others (social contact). Although significant differences were not found in compliance to demands or caregivers' restrictiveness, the findings are in the direction of the Landauer,

Carlsmith, and Lepper (1970) finding of less obedience to own mother than other mothers and the Halverson and Waldrop (1970) findings that mothers use less positive encouragement and more negative sanctions with their own children than with other children. Caregivers gave more attention to their own children partly in response to their own children's more frequent negative behaviors (i.e., fighting, distress) and partly because they seem more involved in socializing their own children. It is important to determine if own children continue to show more negative behaviors when day care children are not present, and if day care children show more negative behaviors in their own homes, and receive more controlling and rewarding responses from their own mothers.

As in Peters (1973), caregivers rarely planned educational activities and spent little time in teaching, playing or reinforcement. As in Prescott (1973), the children showed high levels of self-initiation, free-choice as to activity, encouragement for their activities, and low levels of tentative behaviors, inattentiveness to stimuli, frustrations, or insensitive response or restrictive social rules from caregivers. The "average" caregiver style observed was of facilitating the free-play activities initiated by children, directing the basic care activities, and responding with information and teaching to children's initiations. As hypothesized by Grotberg et al. (1971), FDC seems to provide not a formal educational setting, but rather flexible, warm, responsible, child-centered interaction.

The results here may not be representative of FDC in general: (1) the sample is quite small; (2) the high proportion of licensed and affiliated caregivers may tend to be more committed and professional than random; (3) less able caregivers may not have been willing to be observed; (4) infants

and school-aged children were not observed; (5) the effects of being observed are unknown. Further analyses are in process to explore how some aspects along which FDC homes vary--such as licensing, number of children in the home, age of children, attitudes of caregiver, and behavior setting--may influence the qualities of interaction in the FDC home.

At least for the homes and children observed, FDC seemed to provide for both own and day care children a warm and rich environment in which to develop socially and cognitively through play with peers, facilitated by caregivers. Investigation is crucial to determine empirically how the observed similarities and differences in the experiences of caregivers' own and day care children in FDC affect their long-term development.

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Table 1

Median Frequencies of Activities in Each Category Cluster for Own and Day Care Children[1]

Activity	All Children		Own Children		Day Care Children	
	median	percent	median	range	median	range
Act:						
Highly Intellectual	22	18.3	22	0-52	22	0-63
Moderately Intellectual	41	34.2	37	22-61	48**	32-78
Basic Care/Gross Motor	23.5	20.0	22	1-37	24	2-39
Purposeless	1	.8	2	0-5	1	0-14
Positive Social-Emotional	22	18.3	23	6-44	19	3-41
Negative Social-Emotional	4.5	3.8	10**	2-23	3	0-12
Initiation:						
Continuation	48	40.0	48	26-66	49	10-67
Self	61	50.8	65	42-74	59	39-101
Other	11.5	10.0	12	4-23	12	2-30
Participant:						
Alone	25.5	21.3	23	5-47	28*	6-70
Caregiver	24	21.7	36*	8-80	19	5-60
Peer/Sibling	55.5	46.3	49	22-97	59	27-106
Other	4	3.3	5	0-11	3	0-11
Encouragement[2]:						
Encourage	43	35.8	50	11-88	42	3-87
Discourage	4.5	3.8	6**	0-17	3	0-8

Activity	All Children		Own Children		Day Care Children	
	median	percent	median	range	median	range
Technique[2]:						
Observe	18	12.9	22**	11-50	14	5-30
Participate	30	25.0	30	8-68	31	2-75
Facilitate/Suggest	11	9.2	12	2-39	9	2-19
Inform/Teach	9	5.4	9	1-32	2	0-47
Affection/Reinforcement	2	1.7	2	0-12	2	0-10
Restriction/Hostility	3	4.2	5**	0-13	3	0-7
Compliance[3]:						
Complies	11	9.2	9	5-26	11	1-21
Does Not Comply	1	.8	2	0-10	1	0-7
Verbal:						
Verbal	71	60.4	74**	35-103	70	11-106

* $p<.05$, Two-tailed Wilcoxin signed rank tests.
** $p<.01$, Two-tailed Wilcoxin signed rank tests.

1 For each child, 120 15-second activities were coded. See Appendix I for categories.
2 Not coded for activities engaged in Alone.
3 Coded only for behavior requests or Other-initiated activities.

Table 2

Median Frequency of Activity Clusters Engaged in

by Different Participants for Own and DC Children

	Alone		Caregiver		Peer/Sibling	
	own	dc	own	dc	own	dc
Highly Intellectual	4	4	2	2	11	11
Moderately Intellectual	8	8	7	6	17	26**
Basic Care/Gross Motor	6	7	5	4	7	5
Positive Social-Emotional	0	6**	4	2	12	13
Negative Social-Emotional	0	0	6**	0	5*	2

* $p<.05$

** $p<.01$, Sign test.

Appendix I

Categories and Reliabilities for Coding Activity of the Focal Child[1]

Dimension	Reliability[2]	Categories
Act: What area of competence is this activity likely to contribute, and how likely is it to lead to development of social or intellectual competence	62%	Highly Intellectual: Child's systematic and concentrated approach to ordinary or educational material likely to lead to intellectual gain. -Verbal and Symbolic Learning -Perceptual, Spatial and Fine Motor Learning -Concrete Reasoning and Conceptual Learning -Expressive Skills -Executive Skills Moderately Intellectual: Generalized experiences in which child's concentration is less intense and activity has no specifiable goal. -Exploration of and Play with Household Items or Nature -Play with Toys -Gaining General and Routine Information Basic Care/Gross Motor: Nonintellectual activities concerned with daily routines or physical exercise. -Basic Care -Gross Motor Purposeless: Aimless wandering or inattentiveness to external stimuli. -Purposeless Positive Social Emotional: Focus of child's activity is on the expression of positive emotion or social reciprocation. -Positive Emotional Expression -Social Games -Social Cooperation and Empathy -Self-Assertion -Social Contact

[1] Rationale, definitions and descriptions of the scale are available in White and Watts (1973). Social-Emotional act categories are adapted from Watts et al. (1972). Modifications for the present study are available from the author.

[2] Reliability scores are the average percentage of 120 acts for which the two observers coded the same category for 10 Ss.

Dimension	Reliability	Categories
		Negative Social-Emotional: Focus of child is on expression of negative emotions or social conflict. -Negative Social Expression -Distress -Attention-Competition
Initiation: Who initiated the activity?	74%	Continuation Self Other
Participant: Who, if anyone, is the principal participant in the activity?	76%	Alone Caregiver Peer/Sibling Other
Encouragement: Is the behavior of the participant likely to encourage or discourage the child's activity?	72%	Encourage Discourage Neutral
Technique: How does participant behave toward child--to what degree is he involved, how directively, cognitive or emotional emphasis, facilitation or inhibition of act?	63%	Observe or Interpret Active Participation Facilitate/Suggest Inform or Justify/Didactic Teaching Restriction: -Distracting or Ignoring -Restricting -Hostility Affection/Reinforcement
Compliance: Does the child comply with behavior requests of participant?	89%	Complies Does Not Comply Neutral
Verbal: Is the interaction of the child or participant verbal?	77%	Verbal Nonverbal